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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 004477

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR GENS. ABIZAID AND JONES' JULY 18-19 VISIT TO ANKARA

Classified by DCM Robert S. Deutsch. Reason: 1.5 (b)(d).

1. (S) Summary: Your visits come as we try to close the July 4 incident and pull Turkey into a more fully helpful role in Iraq. The last year has shaken the confidence of the Turkish public, politicians, and military in the strength of the relationship with the U.S., just as it has shaken our confidence in the Turks. While we have been able to manage the issue of the July 4 incident, it is likely to fester for a long time in the minds of many Turks as a humiliation to the military, and could thus continue to affect U.S.-Turkey security cooperation broadly. In part, our problems come from divergent views on Iraq, particularly the security threat from various possible development in northern Iraq. However, in large part they are also a function of Turkish domestic politics. The ruling AK Party is seen as a threat to the existing order of Turkey that the military and much of the Establishment is trying to defend -- and the military is seen as a barrier to the changes AK and others would like to make in Turkey. The relationship with the U.S., the reforms needed for the EU and even the range of Iraq issues have been approached, frequently, by both sides in the context of the relationship between the military/traditional Establishment and AK, rather than on their merits. In reacting to the July 4 incident, P.M. Erdogan and F.M. Gul maintained a measured approach, while the TGS, under pressure from military hard-liners, refused any responsibility and stirred national outrage. The implications of the internal political dynamic for the wider issue of GOT Iraq policy are considerable. Civilian authorities would like to complete a transformation of Iraq policy away from the historic northern-Iraq centered obsession and fear of a Kurdish state -- a change in focus that stems in part from efforts by the MFA and other civilian authorities to wrestle control over Turkey's Iraq policy from the Turkish military. End summary.

The Domestic Context

2. (C) F.M. Gul and P.M. Erdogan have maintained a measured approach to the incident in Iraq in order to protect our bilateral relationship and to press its proposed reform package to loosen the TGS's grip on Turkish policy. However, to keep their political opponents off balance, they have publicly been supportive of the military. The hard-liners saw the event as a way to resist AK's effort and weaken its standing by attacking it as an American "supporter." Thus, the AK stance contrasts starkly with the reaction from the military, President Sezer, and opposition CHP, all of whom have used the press to castigate both AK for being "too soft" and the U.S. for its actions. After the release of the joint statement the Turkish press focused on the absence of an apology.

3. (C) U.S.-Turkey tensions fit into a complex competition between AK and the military. They portray themselves as having opposed visions of Turkey's future. Within each group there are tensions too. There are increasing signs of discontent among hard-liners in the senior military leadership, who are trying to force TGS chief Ozkok into a more confrontational stance toward the USG as a way to rally nationalism and counter AK. The difference between the AK Government and the Establishment on this front highlights a basic gap in Turkey between those -- led in the first instance by the military hawks -- who support an order linked to a rigid, statist-oriented view of what Ataturk wanted for the Republic of Turkey, and those who say they want a more open, EU candidacy-linked, conservative Turkey, with greater opportunity for Islamic influences, to prevail. In this political competition there are also question marks regarding AK's: 1) ultimate social, political, and economic intentions domestically; and 2) its ability to run a competent government and willingness to respond to U.S. interests. The domestic competition is often more important to the TGS or AK than the issues being addressed, and many U.S.-Turkey questions are dealt with as fodder as much as on their merits.

Iraq: Signs of a Shift In Policy

14. (S) Turkey's civilian authorities would like to complete a transformation of Iraq policy away from the historic northern-Iraq centered obsession with border security, fear of a Kurdish state, and Turkish military presence towards a more Baghdad-oriented policy based primarily on trade and assistance. This change in focus, to the extent it has been realized, appears to stem in part from efforts by the MFA and other civilian authorities to wrestle control over Turkey's Iraq policy from the Turkish military. During a recent one-on-one with the Ambassador, MFA U/S Ziyal said he had asked P.M. Erdogan after the end of combat operations in Iraq to transfer authority over the issue of northern Iraq (and Iraq) from the TGS to the MFA. However, the detention of TSF by the U.S. military in northern Iraq on July 4 has raised suspicions on both sides of the other's intentions.

15. (SBU) The Turks have taken a number of concrete steps in humanitarian assistance and reconstruction since the Secretary's April visit to Turkey. Turkey has become a hub

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for facilitating the flow of humanitarian assistance to northern Iraq. The World Food Program has shipped 341,000 tons of food through Turkey since March. Turkey is also the world's biggest supplier (in value terms) to WFP. Turkey recently allowed an energy barter arrangement organized by Delta Petroleum to go forward. This will enable coalition authorities to supply essential energy supplies to the Iraqi people.

16. (C) Turkey has an opportunity to build strong trade links with Iraq. During his Washington meetings in June, MFA U/S Ziyal raised Turkey's interest in building a second border crossing to relieve the burden on the Habur Gate (now handling some 2000 vehicles daily). Bottlenecks in processing vehicles continue on both sides of the border, with the KDP continuing to charge some (including UN) vehicles fees and the GOT carefully scrutinizing incoming trucks to limit fuel smuggling. The Turks have applied to reestablish THY commercial air links with Iraq when that becomes feasible.

Relations with Iraqi Kurds

17. (C) The MFA has portrayed the mid-May visit to Iraq by a three-person MFA delegation as improving Turkish-Kurdish relations. The Turkish delegation found both KDP leader Barzani and PUK leader Talabani willing to take concrete steps to improve relations. The MFA delegation proposed a number of confidence-building measures designed to improve relations, including: (1) more equitable and transparent duties charged to Turkish businesses crossing the border; (2) softening of rhetoric between Kurdish and Turkmen groups in Iraq; (3) establishment of Turkish-Kurdish joint ventures in the north; and (4) establishment of "one-stop shopping" in key northern Iraqi cities for Turkish business groups. Barzani reportedly committed in principle to taking steps to improve Kurdish-Turkmen relations, but said he could not "change course overnight." He said the KDP would explore taking incremental steps toward improving relations, and said that that much would depend on the actions of the Turkmen. The KDP and PUK leaders also reportedly heeded Turkey's request to refrain from calling for the end of the Peace Monitoring Force and the withdrawal of the Turkish participating troops at least until the end of the year to give the Turkish military time to "feel more comfortable" with the overall security situation on the ground in Iraq.

18. (C) The GOT remains concerned about what it perceives to be undue Kurdish influence on coalition authorities in northern Iraq. They have strongly objected to coalition plans to disarm all groups except the Kurds, which they believe gives the Kurds too much power over the other ethnic groups, particularly the Turkmen.

Turkmen in Iraq

19. (C) While the GOT remains concerned about the fate of Turkmen, the frequency and tone of Turkish "complaints" of

mistreatment of the Turkmen by other Iraqi groups have declined significantly. The military has tried to play the Turkmen card for several years, but civilian officials appear to have made a conscious decision to change the way they talk about the Turkmen. The nearly daily reports of Kurdish efforts to marginalize Turkmen have been replaced by statements about the importance of ensuring proportionate representation for all Iraqi groups in local and central decision-making bodies. The MFA regularly talks about the need for the Iraqi Turkmen Front to become a real political party, to not be seen as a tool of Ankara, and to integrate itself into the political process in Iraq. The GOT continues to look to the U.S. to help ensure proper Turkmen representation on key leadership councils in the north as well as in the IIA. They have expressed disappointment that only one Turkmen, who is not part of the ITF leadership, was named to the Governing Council.

EU Candidacy

110. (C) Since coming to power in the November elections, the ruling AK Party has made EU membership a top priority. The GOT in January adopted two EU-related legislative reform packages designed to crack down on torture and remove barriers to free expression, association, and fair trial. Parliament adopted another package June 19, the sixth package in the past two years, and the GOT plans to pass a seventh package before a parliamentary recess in August. Our contacts have confirmed press reports that the seventh package will be focused on limiting the military's political influence, including measures that will change the structure of the National Security Council. However, the pro-EU, pro-reform AK government faces opposition from nationalistic opponents in the bureaucracy and parts of the military. In several instances, bureaucratic institutions have undermined reform legislation by developing highly restrictive implementing regulations. For example, Parliament lifted restrictions on Kurdish language broadcasting, but the subsequent Radio and Television Board regulation set strict time limits and restricted such broadcasts to state-owned media outlets. In addition, our European contacts say that while the GOT has made impressive legal reforms, Turkey's standing in the EU has also been undermined by recent actions such as the closing of the pro-Kurdish HADEP party and indictment of its sister party, DEHAP, and the recent police raid of the Human Rights Association's Ankara offices.

Turkish Military

111. (S) Contacts in the MFA, press, and among national security analysts think the Turkish military misjudged Turkey's equities in Iraq after the end of operations and that TGS's efforts to use the Turkmen issue as a wedge against U.S. policy was a mistake. TGS D/CHOD Buyukanit, regarded as one of the senior officers pushing a harder line against the US during the Iraq war, also admitted that the Turkish military had misplayed its hand on Iraq. While arguing that both sides had made mistakes and defending (without great conviction) TGS's attempts to persuade the Parliament to pass the March 1 troop deployment resolution, Buyukanit had said -- before the July 4 incident -- that TGS was ready to move forward with the U.S. TGS supported the recent Cabinet decree to allow the U.S. and other coalition partners to use Turkish bases and ports for operations consistent with UNSCR 1483, including a positive response in principle to EUCOM's request to station up to 10 tankers and 1 ISR aircraft at Incirlik in support of OEF and OIF operations (EUCOM is in the process of reviewing TGS's operating guidelines for the deployment and stationing of the aircraft, but we are taking a slow approach in the wake of the detention of TSF in Iraq).

112. (C) TGS asserts privately and publicly that it supports Turkey's EU candidacy and wants to adopt stances on important issues (i.e. non-military approach to PKK/KADEK) that would help Turkey vis-a-vis the EU. However, top military officers also have recently publicly criticized the EU and taken measures to delay EU-related reforms. Many continue to believe that TGS was behind President Sezer's recent decision to veto an article of the GOT's 6th EU-related reform package and that the Turkish military will continue to resist all efforts by AK to lessen the military's control over what it considers to be its sacred role in protecting Turkey's "secular" status and national security interests.

113. (S) On the TGS horizon is the August Supreme Military

Council (YAS). Among the four-star ranks, both the Navy and Air Force commanders retire this year, as will the commanders of the First and Third Turkish Armies, and the National Security Council Secretary General. The YAS could allow Ozkok, who is beginning the second year of his four-year tour as Chief of the Turkish General Staff, the first real opportunity to shape his own leadership team. Last year, contrary to tradition, the outgoing chief made all the general officer assignment and promotion selections. Ozkok, however, may be constrained by the hard-liners and other traditionalists with whom he is contending on a number of issues.

The Economy

14. (SBU) The economy is sending mixed signals. On the one hand, there are solid signs of growth and declining inflation. On the other hand, after having rallied strongly in the aftermath of the Iraq operation, particularly once the USG announced it would provide \$1 billion in financial assistance, markets have stalled due to the lack of investor confidence in the government's commitment to reform. Markets are particularly concerned about continuing delays in completing the work for the fifth review under the IMF program. As a result, interest rates on the extremely large government debt remain high, and the economy remains vulnerable to a sharp depreciation of the currency, which would put the entire program and economic stability at risk. We need to stress the importance of Turkey flawlessly implementing its commitments to the IMF. Disbursement of USD 1 billion in U.S. assistance is contingent on continued implementation of the IMF program.

15. (SBU) In June, MFA U/S Ziyal and U/S Larson agreed to convene a fall meeting of the Economic Partnership Commission (EPC), which was established in early 2002 to find ways to enhance the bilateral economic relationship. The meeting will be an opportunity to press a broad economic agenda including structural reform, reduction of trade barriers improving the investment climate, and enhancing regional economic cooperation.
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